

Message Text

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SUBJECT: REVIEW OF 1974 HUNGER STRIKE BY AMERICAN PRISONERS

REF: HUGHES-MCLENDON TELECON, AUGUST 26, 1976

1. THE 1974 HUNGER STRIKE BY AMERICAN PRISONERS AT LECUMBERRI HOLDING JAIL AND LOS REYES WOMEN'S PRISON "OFFICIALLY" LASTED SIXTEEN DAYS, FROM JULY 9 THROUGH JULY 24. EMBASSY RECORDS INDICATE THAT PARTICIPATION WAS FAR FROM UNIVERSAL AND, AMONG THE WOMEN PRISONERS WHO TOOK PART, MOST CONSUMED FRUIT JUICES AND EGGS, ONLY AVOIDING SOLIDS. DURING THE STRIKE, MOST OF THE PARTICIPANTS WOULD NOT SPEAK WITH CONSULAR OFFICERS FROM THE EMBASSY, BUT ON SEVERAL OCCASIONS, THE PRISON AUTHORITIES TOLD THE CONSULAR OFFICERS THAT THE PRISONERS WERE IN FACT EATING. THEY ALSO ADVISED, HOWEVER, THAT DURING THE STRIKE AT LEAST FORTY-THREE PRISONERS COMPLAINED OF WEAKNESS AND TIREDNESS, AND WERE PUT INTO THE PRISON INFIRMARY FOR TWO DAYS EACH AND FED A DIET OF FRUITS, VEGETABLES AND JUICES. ONE PRISONER WAS REPORTED SERIOUSLY ILL, BUT IT TURNED OUT THAT HIS ILLNESS WAS NOT CONNECTED WITH THE STRIKE, AND THERE IS NO INDICATION IN THE EMBASSY'S FILES THAT ANYONE SUFFERED ANY SERIOUS EFFECTS FROM THE STRIKE.

2. BEFORE, DURING AND AFTER THE HUNGER STRIKE, VARIOUS UNCLASSIFIED

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PRISONERS INSISTED THAT THEIR GRIEVANCES AND THE STRIKE

ITSELF WERE NOT DIRECTED TOWARD THE PRISON OFFICIALS OR THE MEXICAN GOVERNMENT, BUT AGAINST THE USG AND THE EMBASSY. THEY CLAIMED THAT THEIR REAL PROBLEMS STEMMED FROM US PRESSURE ON THE MEXICANS TO ARREST AMERICANS WITH DRUGS AND TO GIVE THEM LONG SENTENCES. THE CONSUL GENERAL AND CCS CHIEF MET WITH 27 AMERICAN PRISONERS AT LECUMBERRI ON THE MORNING OF JULY 9, BEFORE A DEFINITE DECISION HAD BEEN MADE TO PROCEED WITH THE STRIKE. SIX CANADIAN PRISONERS AND A CANADIAN VICE CONSUL WERE ALSO PRESENT. THE PRISONERS TOLD THE CONOFFS THAT THEY HAD QUOTE SUFFICIENT EVIDENCE TO SHOW THAT THE AMERICAN GOVERNMENT THROUGH THE AMERICAN EMBASSY IN MEXICO HAS FORCED THE MEXICAN JUDICIAL SYSTEM TO DENY US DUE PROCESS UNQUOTE. THERE FOLLOWED A LENGTHY AND HEATED DIALOGUE DURING WHICH THE CG, WHILE ACKNOWLEDGING US COOPERATION WITH GOM IN THE ANTI-DRUG EFFORT, DENIED UNDUE US INFLUENCE. HE GAVE ASSURANCES THAT IF THE PRISONERS WOULD SUBMIT CONCRETE EVIDENCE OF DENIAL OF DUE PROCESS, IT WOULD BE INVESTIGATED AND BROUGHT TO THE ATTENTION OF THE APPROPRIATE AUTHORITIES. HE INDICATED HE COULD NOT SAY HOW LONG THIS MIGHT TAKE. THE PRISONERS REGARDED THE EMBASSY ATTITUDE AS PRESENTED BY THE CG TO BE GENERALLY NEGATIVE AND VOTED TO PROCEED WITH THE STRIKE.

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